

Other ways to reduce headaches



- Be active and exercise every day
- Limit caffeine found in soft drinks, coffee, tea
- Try to get enough sleep to feel rested
- Drink water: about 8 cups or more a day (64 ounces)
- Practice relaxation activities to lower stress and anxiety
 - ➔ Deep Breathing
 - ➔ Tai Chi or Yoga
 - ➔ Listen to music
 - ➔ Meditation



How will I know my plan is helping?

1. Less headache pain
2. More days headache-free
3. You will be able to do more
4. You may need to take less medication for headaches



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
VA PBM Academic Detailing Service

Contact info:



Headaches

What Can You Do to Ease the Pain?

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
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Identify and be mindful of your headache triggers



Keep a headache diary to see what affects your headaches

Triggers are things that can bring on or make your headaches worse. Some common triggers are:

- Emotional
 - stress, anxiety, anger
- Medication
 - overuse of opioids, butalbital, and other pain medicines
- Lifestyle
 - skipped meals, dehydration, change in sleep, extreme fatigue
- Diet
 - caffeine, processed or fermented foods, food additives, artificial sweeteners, alcohol
- Environmental
 - high altitude, motion changes, flickering lights, odors, smoking
- Hormonal
 - menstrual periods, menopause and other hormonal changes

What can you do? Steps to treat a headache

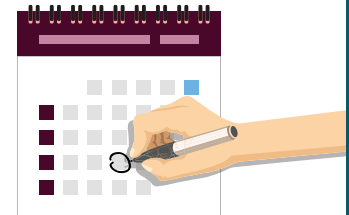
- If you can, go to a quiet dark room where you can relax
- Drink water: about 8 cups or more a day (64 ounces)
- Place a cool damp cloth on your head
- Take headache medication as recommended by your provider
- Try to limit your use of pain pills. Avoid using it more than 2 times a week (both prescribed and over the counter pain pills)
- Many pain medications can cause more headaches. The pain can also get worse after taking several doses.
 - Opioid medications
 - oxycodone
 - hydrocodone
 - morphine
 - codeine and others
 - Pills containing butalbital



If you think your pain pills may be worsening your headaches, call your provider to discuss alternatives.

Headache prevention medicines

- If you have at least 1 headache a week, or if your headaches are severe and disabling, ask your provider about medications to prevent headaches
 - These medications are taken every day
 - When you first start them, it can take 4 to 6 weeks or longer to see the full effect
 - Prevention medications can reduce how often you have the headache and decrease the pain from the headache



- Types of medications used for headache prevention:
 - Beta-blockers
 - Propranolol, metoprolol
 - Anticonvulsants
 - Topiramate, divalproex sodium, valproic acid
 - Antidepressants
 - Amitriptyline, nortriptyline, imipramine, desipramine
 - Venlafaxine
 - Mirtazapine